

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

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INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

S E C R E T 0838

LIMDIS

FOR TODMAN/LUERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION IN
U.S. BILATERAL DISPUTES

REF: STATE 027594

SUMMARY: DURING FEBRUARY 18 MEETING, AMBASSADOR INFORMED PRESIDENT SOMOZA THAT DURING DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA, PRESSURE FROM THIRD PARTIES OR IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL, OR WELCOMED. SOMOZA AGREED WITH U.S. POSITION, FELT IT WOULD NOT HAVE MUCH IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTRIES, BUT PROMISED TO MAKE EFFORT TO AVOID INTERFERENCE IN U.S. BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING OUR MEETING ON FEBRUARY 18, 1977, PRESIDENT SOMOZA STATED
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THAT WHILE THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAD RESUMED CANAL NEGOTIATIONS, HE DETECTED SIGNS OF GROWING DISCONTENT WITH PANAMA IN THE U.S. CONGRESS. SOMOZA MENTIONED NEW YORK CONGRESSMEN JOHN MURPHY'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER WHICH HE SAID WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE TORRIJOS REGIME.

2. FOLLOWING LINE SUGGESTED REF DEPTTEL, WE EXPLAINED TO SOMOZA

THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WAS INVOLVED IN DELICATE AND COMPLEX NEGOTIATING PREOCESS WITH PANAMA, AND FOR THAT REASON WE FELT THAT PRESSURE FROM THIRD PARTIES OR IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL. WE DIRECTED HIS ATTENTION TO THE LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER THAT HE HAD SIGNED WITH SEVEN OTHER CHIEFS OF STATE AS AN EXAMPLE OF THIRD PARTY INTERFERENCE IN OUR BILETERAL NEGOTIATING PROCESS WITH PANAMA WHICH WOULD NOT BE WELCOMED IN THE FUTURE.

3. PRESIDENT SOMOZA REPLIED THAT THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY WHICH HE FOUND VERY INTERESTING. HE EXPRESSED HIS AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. POSITION BUT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S ADMONITION WOULD BE RESPECTED BY OTHER COUNTRIES. HE FELT IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE. TORRIJOS HAD PERSUADED OTHER COUNTRIES THAT HE WANTED THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION ON HIS BEHALF IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THE UNITED STATE ON THE PANAMA CANAL ISSUE. LATIN SOLIDARITY MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR ANY COUNTRY TO RESIST PANAMANIAN IMPORTUNITY.

4. THE PRESIDENT ADDED THAT FOR HIS PART HE WOULD RESPECT THE U.S. POSITION. WE COULD BE ASSURED THAT HE WOULD REFUSE TO DO ANYTHING THAT CONSTITUTED INTERFERENCE IN THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND HE WOULD TRY TO AVOID PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PANAMA'S POSITION. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED HAVING A CLEAR STATEMENT OF POLICY FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND SECRETARY VANCE ON THIS IMPORTANT MATTER, SOMETHING THAT DID NOT EXIST BEFORE.

5. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT'S REFTEL (ESP. PARAS 10 AND 11) RAISES A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE WHICH IS NOT LIMITED IN ITS APPLICATION TO OUR PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA, AND THAT IS WHETHER THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD ACCEPT WITHOUT OPPOSITION THIRD PARTY
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INTERFERENCE IN U.S. BILATERAL DISPUTES OR NEGOTIATIONS ON ANY MATTER. LATING COUNTRIES VIGOROUSLY RESIST INTERFEREANCE IN THEIR BILATERAL DISPUTES AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, UNLESS PROBLEM IS WITH UNITED STATES OR OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRY, IN WHICH CASE LATING SOLIDARITY IS INVOKED. IN PAST, FAILURE OF UNITED STATES TO REACT HAS TENDED TO ENCOURAGE LATINS TO TRANSFORM ESSENTIALLY BILATERAL ISSUES (E.G., PANAMA CANAL AND TRADE ACT'S OPEC EXCLUSION) INTO REGIONAL ONES, WITH THE LATIN COUNTRIES UNITED IN A STRAGEGY OF PRESSURE (SOMETIMES CONFRONTATION) AGAINST US. IS DEPARTMENT'S POSITION ON PANAMA PART OF, OR PRELUE TO, A MORE GENERAL POLICY OPPOSING THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION AND EFFORTS TO INTERNATIONALIZE BILATERAL CLAIMS AGAINST AGAINST UNITED STATES? MY VIEW IS THAT MORE GENERAL APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE STRONGLY SERVES U.S. INTERESTS. DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
THEBERGE

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